

IN THE CLAIMS

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) An information distribution system having a terminal apparatus and an information center, in which a recording medium having recorded thereon unrewritable prepaid information is loadable in the terminal apparatus so as to enable content data to be transmitted to the recording medium from the information center via a predetermined communication line, said terminal apparatus comprising:

first receiving means for receiving said content data transmitted from said information center;

recording and reproducing means for recording said content data received by said first receiving means onto said recording medium loaded by a purchaser in said terminal apparatus and reproducing an identifier unique to said recording medium and said unrewritable prepaid information, wherein said unrewritable prepaid information includes a prepaid amount of money and a prepaid service ID representative of an address of the information center; and

first transmitting means for transmitting said reproduced identifier unique to said recording medium and said reproduced unrewritable prepaid information to said information center;

said information center comprising:

first storage means for storing a plurality of content data;

second transmitting means for transmitting predetermined content data from said first storage means to said terminal apparatus;

second receiving means for receiving said identifier unique to said recording medium and said unrewritable prepaid information transmitted from said terminal apparatus;

second storage means for storing a usable remaining amount of money relative to said unrewritable prepaid information in accordance with said identifier unique to said recording medium and said unrewritable prepaid information received by said second receiving means; and

charging processing means for updating, when said predetermined content data are transmitted from said first storage means to said terminal apparatus, said usable remaining amount of money stored in said second storage means for a charge of said predetermined content data transmitted from said first storage means to said terminal apparatus,

wherein the prepaid amount of money included in said unrewritable prepaid information on the recording medium is not updated when said predetermined content data is transmitted from the first storage means to said terminal

apparatus—;

first comparing means for comparing said usable remaining amount of money stored in said second storage means with a price of content data to be transmitted to said terminal apparatus;

wherein, when said usable remaining amount of money is found by said first comparing means to be less than said price of said content data to be transmitted to said terminal apparatus, a control signal is transmitted from said information center to said terminal apparatus to instruct said terminal apparatus to prompt for the loading of a second recording medium recording beforehand an identifier unique thereto and prepaid information into said terminal apparatus; and

adding means for adding, when said second recording medium has been loaded in response to the prompt for the loading of said second recording medium, a usable remaining amount of money in said second recording medium to said usable remaining amount of money in the previously loaded recording medium.

Claim 2. (previously presented) The information distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said recording medium also records information about a remaining recordable capacity thereof, said information is reproduced by

said recording and reproducing means, and said reproduced information is transmitted by said first transmitting means to said information center.

Claims 3-5. (canceled)

Claim 6. (currently amended) The information distribution system according to claim 52, wherein when after loading of said second recording medium into said terminal apparatus in response to the prompt for the loading of said second recording medium, a result of an addition by said adding means is found in excess of said price of said content data to be transmitted, said identifier unique to said recording medium and said prepaid information stored in said second storage means are edited based on said information about the remaining recordable capacity of said previously loaded recording medium and said information about the remaining recordable capacity of said second recording medium.

Claims 7-16. (canceled)

Claim 17. (currently amended) An information center connected to a terminal apparatus via a predetermined communication line for distributing content data, the information center comprising:

first storage means for storing a plurality of content data;

transmitting means for transmitting predetermined content data from said first storage means to said terminal apparatus;

receiving means for receiving from said terminal apparatus an identifier unique to a recording medium and unrewritable prepaid information stored in the recording medium which is loaded in said terminal apparatus, wherein said unrewritable prepaid information includes a prepaid amount of money and a prepaid service ID representative of an address of the information center;

second storage means for storing a usable remaining amount of money in accordance with said identifier unique to said recording medium and said unrewritable prepaid information received by said receiving means; and

charging processing means for updating, when said predetermined content data are transmitted from said first storage means to said terminal apparatus, said usable remaining amount of money stored in said second storage means for a charge of said predetermined content data transmitted from said first storage means to said terminal apparatus,

wherein the prepaid amount of money included in said unrewritable prepaid information on the recording medium

is not updated when said predetermined content data is transmitted from said first storage means to said terminal apparatus;_

first comparing means for comparing said usable remaining amount of money stored in said second storage means with a price of content data to be transmitted to said terminal apparatus;

wherein, when said usable remaining amount of money is found by said first comparing means to be less than said price of said content data to be transmitted, a control signal is transmitted from said information center to said terminal apparatus to instruct said terminal apparatus to prompt for the loading of a second recording medium, having recorded thereon an identifier unique thereto and prepaid information, into said terminal apparatus; and

adding means for adding, when said second recording medium has been loaded in response to the prompt for the loading of said second recording medium, a usable remaining amount of money in said second recording medium to said usable remaining amount of money in the previously loaded recording medium.

Claims 18-20. (canceled)

Claim 21. (currently amended) The information center according to claim 2017, wherein, when after loading of said second recording medium into said terminal apparatus in response to the prompt of the loading of said second recording medium, a result of an addition by said adding means is found to be in excess of said price of said content data to be transmitted, said identifier unique to said recording medium and said prepaid information stored in said second storage means are edited based on said information about the remaining recordable capacity of said previously loaded recording medium and said information about the remaining recordable capacity of said second recording medium.

Claims 22-29. (canceled)

Claim 30. (currently amended) An information distribution method for distributing content data from an information center to a recording medium loaded in a terminal apparatus, , said information center and said terminal apparatus being interconnected via a predetermined communication line, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving an identifier unique to said recording medium and unrewritable prepaid information recorded on said recording medium loaded by a purchaser in said

terminal apparatus and transmitted from said terminal apparatus, wherein said unrewritable prepaid information includes a prepaid amount of money and a prepaid service ID representative of an address of the information center;

storing in a memory a usable remaining amount of money relative to said unrewritable prepaid information in accordance with said received identifier unique to said recording medium and said received unrewritable prepaid information;

comparing said usable remaining amount of money stored in said memory with a charge of content data to be distributed from said information center to said terminal apparatus; wherein when said usable remaining amount of money is found to be smaller than said price of said content data to be transmitted, a control signal is transmitted from said information center to said terminal apparatus to instruct said terminal apparatus to prompt for the loading of a second recording medium having recorded thereon an identifier unique to said second recording medium and prepaid information;

adding, when said second recording medium has been loaded in response to the prompt for the loading of said second recording medium, a usable remaining amount of money in said second recording medium to said usable

remaining amount of money in the previously loaded recording medium;

permitting, when said usable remaining amount of money stored in said memory is greater than said charge of said content data to be distributed from said information center to said recording medium loaded in said terminal apparatus, the transmission of said content data from said information center to said recording medium loaded in said terminal apparatus; and

updating, by said charge of said content data, said usable remaining amount of money stored in a second memory when said content data are transmitted from said information center to said recording medium loaded in said terminal apparatus,

wherein the prepaid amount of money included in said unrewritable prepaid information on said recording medium is not updated when said predetermined content data is transmitted from said information center to said recording medium loaded in said terminal apparatus.

Claims 31-40. (canceled)